

CHAPTER III.

IN less than one week Valmond was as outstanding from Pontiac as Dalgrothe Mountain, just beyond it in the south. His liberality, his jocundity, his occasional abstraction, his meditative pose, were all his own; his humour that of the people. He was too quick in repartee and drollery for a bourgeois, too "near to the bone" in point for an aristocrat, with his touch of the comedian and the peasant also. Besides, he was mysterious and picturesque, and this is alluring to women and to the humble, if not to all the world. It might be his was the comedian's fascination, but the flashes of grotesqueness rather pleased the eye than hurt the taste of Pontiac.

Only in one quarter was there hesitation, added to an anxiety almost painful; for to doubt Monsieur Valmond would have shocked the sense of courtesy so dear to Monsieur the